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Conditions Are Right for Wildland Fires

As hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts prepare for fall activities, the hot, dry days of summer continue to set the stage for wildland fires.

The lush growth of this spring is now tinder dry. The smallest spark has the potential to cause significant damage to property and natural resources, so please take the necessary precautions when working and recreating outdoors.

Always crush smokes dead out; never leave a campfire unattended; ensure that your vehicle has a properly installed spark arrester that is operational; stop and park only in areas clear of vegetation; and observe all fire restrictions. Take precautions, but always be prepared: carry a shovel, bucket and fire extinguisher. Also remember that cross country travel is not allowed on most federal and state lands.

Stage 1 fire restrictions remain in effect on private, state and some federal lands in Big Horn, Blaine, Carbon, Fergus, Hill, Judith Basin, Musselshell, Petroleum, Phillips, Roosevelt, Stillwater, Sweetgrass, Treasure and Yellowstone counties. No restrictions are in effect on Forest Service lands in those counties.

In eastern Montana, Stage 1 fire restrictions are in effect on private, state and federal

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lands (including Forest Service) in Carter, Custer, Powder River, and Rosebud counties. As an additional precaution, no campfires are permitted in the Ashland and Sioux ranger districts of the Custer National Forest, even in the campgrounds.

Under Stage 1, fires are prohibited except within developed recreation sites, and smoking is allowed only in areas cleared of flammable materials. Exemptions include fires fueled solely by liquid petroleum or LPG, or other activities for which there is a permit or written authorization.

An exemption does not absolve an individual or organization from liability or responsibility for any fire started by the exempted activity.

Even in areas not under fire restrictions, a permit is required for any open burning other than campfires. Additional restrictions may also exist in certain areas. **Before burning such things as slash piles, ditches, or fields, please contact your local fire department or sheriff's office for more information and to obtain any necessary permits.**

The Billings Area Restrictions Group coordinates fire restrictions on federal, state and private land in Yellowstone County and surrounding counties. It includes representatives from the Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the counties of Big Horn, Carbon, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, and Yellowstone. Similar groups coordinate restrictions in other regions of Montana.

For more information, please contact the Custer National Forest at 406-657-6200; Bureau of Land Management at 406-896-5013; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at 406-247-4400; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 406-247-2940; Carbon County at 406-446-1595; Stillwater County at 406-321-0204; or your local fire department or sheriff's office.

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